

REMARKS

The Examiner's action mailed on June 21, 2004 has been received and its contents carefully considered.

Claims 1-16 are pending in this application. Claims 1-16 are amended herein. Claim 1 remains the sole independent claim.

In the Action, claims 1-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Numao, U.S. Patent No. 6,647,388. The pending claims are amended herein to more clearly distinguish the present invention over the applied prior art reference.

It is noted that the Examiner's prior art rejection applies expressly to only claims 1-6. Claims 7-16 were added by Preliminary Amendment submitted with the application, in order to eliminate the multiple dependencies of claims 3-6 in the original application. For the purposes of this discussion, the Examiner's rejection of claims 3-6 will be considered to apply to claims 7-16 as well.

Regarding claim 1, the Examiner asserts in the Action that the "policy description" 140 associated with the resource document 40, as described in Numao (see, for example, column 9, lines 33-40) corresponds to the "specific data" in the invention as originally claimed in the present application. As described in the Background Art section of Numao (see, for example, column 1, lines 17-27), the term "policy description" refers to one of a set of rules used to determine whether to permit access, the rules being arranged in a list of elements commonly called an access control list (ACL). Normally, an ACL is based on a three-set list of Subject, Object and Operation. In Numao, the ACL consists of a Subject (access permitted user), Object (target to be accessed), Operation (access permitted operation) and Condition (access permission condition) (see, for example, Figure 6 and description in col. 11, lines 35-42). As noted above, Numao describes the policy descriptions 140 as residing in the resource document 40. Numao fails to teach or even suggest that a policy description, or any specific data included in a policy description, is added to a document to be accessed by a user, as claim 1 would require.

As noted earlier, claim 1 is amended herein to more clearly distinguish the present invention over the applied prior art reference. Specifically, amended claim 1 recites "a second storage means for registering access controlling information including a specific

character string and identification data, wherein said identification data is added to said document if said document includes said specific character string” (emphasis added).

Thus, as shown in Figure 2, for example, of the present application, a character string and ID (identification data) are included in the access controlling information stored in each record. If the specific character string associated with the record is found to be included in a document, then the identification data associated with that record is added to the document. Numao fails to disclose any comparable structure or functionality. The “policy description” in Numao is simply the description of a rule used in controlling access to a data file. There is nothing in Numao to teach or suggest that an element of the policy description is added to a document to associate the document with the policy description. That linkage is achieved in Numao by the including in the rule itself an Object element, i.e., document file name. The present invention does not employ a comparable element in its access controlling information. Instead, it has a unique structure such that, if a character string registered in the “character string” field of the access control list is contained in a document, ID information of the record that includes the character string is added to the document for access control. This arrangement has the advantage that a single rule can be associated with a number of documents, thus simplifying the data structure of the document management system.

Further regarding claim 1, the Examiner points to Numao as disclosing the limitation “access to said document is limited in accordance with contents of added access controlling information, when the access to said document is thereafter requested” (column 8, lines 38-44, column 9, line 61 through column 10, line 3). The description in column 8, lines 38-44 reads “The access control sub-system 240 employs log-in information received from the user verification sub-system 230, the contents of the access request, and the provisions of the security policy for access control to determine whether or not permission should be granted. At this time, as needed, the organization chart and the time information are input for the access permission determination.” The description in column 9, line 61 through column 10, line 3 reads, “Upon receiving the access request 110 or 130, the policy evaluation module 10 detects, from the resource document 40, a policy description 140 that corresponds to the document that is to be accessed (step 401), and performs an evaluation of the extracted policy description 140 (step 402). When all the conditions in the policy

description 140 are permissible, in accordance with the evaluation results, either an access permitted data string 111 or an access inhibited data string 112 is returned to the user who issued the access request (step 403, 404 and 405).”

Thus, in Numao, when an access request is made by the user to the access control sub-system for some data, the access control sub-system determines permission/non-permission of access based on the evaluation result of the policy description and responds to the user. In Numao, the access controlling information exists entirely independent of the document, and no reference to the document is necessary to determine accessibility by the user. Numao lacks any teaching or suggestion that “access to said document is limited in accordance with contents of said access controlling information, when the access to said document is thereafter requested, if said document contains said added identification data,” as recited in claim 1.

For at least the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1, particularly as amended herein, patentably distinguishes over the applied prior art.

It is submitted that claims 2-16 are allowable for at least the reason that they depend from claim 1. Further, the dependent claims recite features that independently distinguish over the applied prior art. For example, claim 3, as well as claim 16, recites the limitation “wherein it is defined whether or not said document includes said specific character string at one of a time when said document is registered, a time when said access controlling information is registered, and a time when the access to said document is requested.” In the Action, the Examiner points to column 9, line 61 through column 10, line 3, as disclosing this feature. What the referenced text discloses is that an evaluation of the policy description is performed when an access request is made for the document. However, there is no disclosure in Numao of any determination as to whether a specific character string is included or not in a document, or of any examination of a document “when said document is registered” or “when said access controlling information is registered.”

Claims 6-8, 10 and 13 recite the limitation “wherein said access controlling information is provided in a single record comprising a plurality of fields, including ID information for identifying said record, and said ID information is added to the document for relating said access controlling information to the document.”


Regarding claim 6, the Examiner points to Numao Figure 6 and asserts that the "ID information" corresponds to the object name or the target document to be accessed. However, the ID information is defined in claim 6 as "ID information for specifying said record" and obviously different from the document name to be accessed. Unlike the scheme in Numao, the ID information in the present invention is associated with a set of "access controlling information" and not with any specific document, as many documents may include the same character string.

All of the Examiner's concerns having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance. Such action and the passing of this case to issue are respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner feel that a conference would help to expedite the prosecution of the application, the Examiner is hereby invited to contact the undersigned counsel to arrange for such an interview.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date


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